

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is when human labour is exploited, willingly or unwillingly, to the profit of others.

For example, by making someone work with little or no remuneration in degrading working conditions. This often goes hand in hand with the use of force, violence, coercion and false pretences.

The most well-known example of human trafficking is forced prostitution, but trafficking also occurs in other sectors, such as agriculture, the service sector or in domestic work settings. Young Dutch women who become victims of so-called loverboys are also victims of human trafficking, because they are exploited and have no control over their own income.

Illegal organ donation also falls under the definition of human trafficking.

Often, people from abroad are lured to the

Netherlands and elsewhere under false pretences; they are offered a better future. Once they arrive in the “promised land”, the situation they find themselves in is very different from what they were told. It appears they have to do different work from what was agreed, or the working conditions are very different from what they were told; they cannot determine their own working hours, they are locked up, have to pay ‘fees’ from their salary, etc.

Very often this goes hand in hand with psychological or physical violence, coercion, violence against family members or threats of violence.

Victims who are registered with Comensha / La Strada Netherlands are predominantly women who work or have worked in forced prostitution. Often, they are reported by police after raids on brothels or sex clubs. Most of them come from abroad, but there are also Dutch victims of trafficking. They are often victims of loverboys. Loverboy practices are a form of human trafficking.

Helena is 19 years old and lives with her parents, brothers and sisters in a small village in the Ukraine. She has no secure job but sometimes works as a waitress in a restaurant. During her work, she gets to know a woman whom she befriends. The woman tells her that she can earn much more money doing the same work in the Netherlands, and that she knows a woman who can help her.

Once she arrives in the Netherlands, however, Helena is taken directly to a brothel. She does not know where she is, her passport is taken from her and she is forced to start working as a prostitute. She is raped repeatedly and all the money she earns is taken from her.

The police discover Helena during a raid on the brothel. They take her to the police station and phone Comensha / La Strada Netherlands. The Helpdesk worker finds a shelter place for her the same day. After she has recovered from the shock, she decides to return home as soon as possible.

Joy comes from West Africa. She no longer has a family and for a few years she has been living with an acquaintance of her deceased mother. This acquaintance hands her over to an ‘uncle’ who is supposed to bring her to Europe to work as a domestic worker in a rich family’s household.

Once she arrives in the Netherlands, Joy finds she has to work long hours, she has no room to herself, looks after the children, cooks and does all the household work. At night, she is often woken up to work. She is beaten when the employer is not satisfied with her work. She is not allowed to leave the house without an escort. Joy is able to escape. After some time, she is referred to Comensha / La Strada Netherlands by a shelter for homeless people; Comensha / La Strada Netherlands arranges adequate shelter and social assistance. Joy eventually lodges a complaint against her former employer and receives a temporary residency permit. Criminal proceedings against the perpetrator are still in progress.

How do you identify human trafficking?

Victims of trafficking often cannot escape from their situation themselves for fear of the trafficker. They also fear deportation and the police. This is why it is important for people who come into contact with victims to recognise signs of human trafficking.

Some of these include:

- a fearful, tense or unhealthy appearance
- lack of travel documents / identity papers
- illegal stay in the Netherlands or illegal entry
- no control over own income
- a significantly high percentage of the income is paid out to a third party
- having to work in all conditions and disproportionately high working hours
- changing the place of work very often
- not having a flat of one’s own / sleeping at the workplace
- being locked up, constantly watched / not being able to go out alone
- being threatened with violence or being a victim of violence

What can you do if you suspect someone to be a victim of trafficking?

You can tell the person there are ways of escape.

If you contact Comensha / La Strada Netherlands, we can advise you what to do in this situation.

There are different possibilities:

For example, you can contact the police, or ‘Meld Misdaad Anoniem’ (‘Report Crimes Anonymously’). The latter is a hotline where you can report what you know without having to disclose your name.

This can be particularly important if you are under threat yourself. The telephone number is 0800-7000 and the line is open seven days a week from 08.00 to 24.00 hrs. You can report incidents in Dutch, English, German or Arabic. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands employees can help you decide what steps to take.

What can you expect when phoning Comensha / La Strada Netherlands

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands Helpdesk workers ask questions about your situation. For example: where the person that you are concerned about works, what evidence you have seen of human trafficking, what the nature of your contact with the person is, whether she or he is under threat, and so forth. On the basis of this account, Comensha / La Strada Netherlands will give you advice. This can, for example, be the suggestion to go to the police, to contact a specialist organisation in your region, or to report your story with 'Meld Misdaad Anoniem'.

The police will ultimately be the authority to take action. If the police indeed find a trafficking victim, she or he is taken to the station, where he or she can relax and tell his or her story. She or he will be told about his/her possibilities. In the event of a language barrier, an interpreter is called.

After this procedure, the police will report the victim to Comensha / La Strada Netherlands. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands then provides information and advice and – at the victim's request – arranges a place of shelter. If the security situation allows, Comensha / La Strada Netherlands tries to find an (emergency) place of shelter in the relevant police region or a neighbouring region. If this is not possible, Comensha / La Strada Netherlands looks for shelters in other parts of the country.

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands will consequently make sure that the person in question receives social support.

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands has a system of local and regional networks that cover every region in the Netherlands. These networks bring together all authorities and organisations that might play a role in the support of victims of human trafficking. These include: shelters, police, lawyers, (sexual) health organisations, victim support, etc. In some regions, a care coordinator ensures that the support offered is well-coordinated.

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands is always on hand to answer any questions or solve problems.

What are the victim's rights?

Reflection period:

A victim has the right to take three months to consider whether to lodge a complaint or cooperate with the authorities to prosecute the trafficker. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands can advise him or her in his/her decision. During the reflection period, a victim has the right to receive a social security contribution, health insurance, legal support and housing in a shelter, for example. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands ensures that the victim receives the right information and puts him/her into contact with the relevant organisations.

If a victim decides to lodge a complaint, she/he may be eligible for a temporary residency permit for the duration of the criminal proceedings. This permit, however, has to be renewed every year. For the duration of the criminal proceedings, the victim has the right to a social security contribution and there are possibilities to study or work.

You can call Comensha / La Strada Netherlands's Helpdesk for more information.

If someone returns to their country of origin, Comensha / La Strada Netherlands can help them with their return.

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands can make an inventory of wishes and requirements, for example, accompaniment to the airport, financial support, shelter, assistance with finding a house or work, help with finding family members of acquaintances. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands will involve other organisations that can help in realising a smooth return.

Comensha / La Strada Netherlands is a partner in the La Strada network, an association of organisations for victims of human trafficking in Central and Eastern Europe, namely in Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and the Netherlands.

It is important to know that if someone is arrested during a police search, she or he has the same rights as if he or she went to the police voluntarily.

Sandjay comes from Bangladesh. He is under-age. His parents paid a lot of money so that he could go to Europe. He travels to Europe with a man he does not know. At Schiphol airport, he is handed over to another man he also does not know and has to hand in his travel documents. He is given a telephone number which he is not allowed to write down but must remember by heart. The man tells him to go to the police and lodge an asylum application; a week later, he is told, he should phone the number and will be picked up. After one week, he phones the number and runs away from his shelter. The unknown man from the airport picks him up and brings him to a house, where he is told that he and some other boys present in the flat will travel on to England. Meanwhile, a neighbour phones the police because of the noise level and reports that too many people are residing in the flat. The police conduct a search and discover several boys. Comensha / La Strada Netherlands finds a shelter place and social support. Sandjay is embarrassed, because his parents paid a lot of money for him to go to Europe. He is still considering lodging a complaint.

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More information:

www.mensenhandel.nl
www.b9-regeling.info
[www.Comensha / La Strada Netherlands.nl](http://www.Comensha/LaStradaNetherlands.nl)

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